

**Quarterly Report**  
**HAITI: CIVIC FORUM AND ELECTIONS**  
**USAID Grant No. 521-G-00-98-00050-00**  
**October 1, 2000 – December 31, 2000**

**I. SUMMARY**

During this reporting period, NDI focused its efforts in Haiti on the Civic Forum (CF), a program that works with pre-existing grassroots organizations in five of Haiti's nine departments to provide citizens with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to play an active role in the democratic process. In Haiti, NDI's 20 Civic Forum moderators organized weekly discussion groups on a series of topics including issues related to the November 26, 2000, elections, the role of political parties in elections, and community organizing techniques. Civic Forum concentrated primarily on election-related issues up to and following the November 26, 2000 presidential and senatorial elections. A slightly more relaxed political environment and the lessening of torrential rains facilitated an increase in the number of meetings during the period. Civic Forum moderators participated in weekly training sessions at the NDI/Haiti office in Port-au-Prince.

NDI also conducted an interim assessment of the Civic Forum program this quarter. An independent team of three evaluators traveled to Haiti and examined several aspects of the program, providing recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program. Since that assessment, NDI staff in Haiti have conducted a number of internal discussions of the assessment's findings and recommendations and are considering its content in its future programming decisions.

NDI continued consultations this quarter with Haiti's nonpartisan electoral monitoring group, the *Conseil National d'Observation* (CNO), and sponsored the participation of one CNO Executive Committee member at a regional meeting of election observation monitoring groups in Nicaragua on November 5-7. This meeting was a follow-up to the September conference organized by *Transparencia* in Peru, also attended by CNO representatives.

The new Director for the Haiti Field Office, Feliz Ulloa, was at NDI's Washington office for orientation with program staff October 23 to 27. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Gerardo Le Chevallier, accompanied Ulloa to Haiti on October 28 for field introduction and orientation in Port-au-Prince. Outgoing Director Almami Cyllah conducted field orientation activities for Ulloa until Cyllah's departure from NDI on November 17.

**II. BACKGROUND**

Following the contested results of the May 21 senatorial and local elections, the U.S. Dept. of State announced that the United States Government would cut all direct assistance to the Haitian government. Meanwhile, opposition parties continued to demand the annulment of the

May elections and threatened to boycott the November 26 presidential elections unless new legislative elections were held.

Despite the continuing questions over the May 21 elections and serious doubts as to the impartiality of the elections authority, the *Conseil Electoral Provisoire* (CEP), elections for the President and nine remaining Senate seats took place on November 26. However, the political opposition largely refused to participate in the elections, and the CEP reported that Jean Bertrand Aristide was elected with about 90 percent of the votes. Incoming President Aristide has recently expressed a will to work with the opposition and to rectify the controversial results of the May 21 elections, but it remains to be seen how the political opposition and the international community will respond to these promises.

In the contentious political context following the May elections and leading up to the November presidential elections, NDI staff working on the Haiti program, in consultation with Haitian activists and observers, agreed that its resources and efforts should focus on working to strengthen civil society in Haiti through grassroots civic education and imparting community organizing techniques. Furthermore, although Civic Forum has been an effective vehicle for achieving these goals, NDI felt this period was an opportune time to conduct an interim assessment of the program to determine how it could be improved and/or expanded to maximize results in the future.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### **A. Civic Forum (CF)**

##### *Program History*

NDI is now in its third year of work with pre-existing grass roots organizations to provide citizens with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to play an active role in the democratic process. Civic Forum combines both civic education and action, familiarizing participants with the fundamentals of democracy while also giving them the necessary tools to take action, engaging both themselves and local government in issues of common community interest. Originally introduced in four communes southeast of Port-au-Prince, CF has since expanded to communes in the South, Southeast, and Artibonite Departments. Today, NDI/Haiti's team of 20 Moderators works with approximately 60 local organizations, having reached more than 350 organizations since the program's inception.

NDI continues to offer weekly training sessions for the Civic Forum moderators, introducing new training techniques, encouraging regular evaluation of the program, and focusing on specific discussion topics of interest to groups participating in the program. Moderators have been trained in community organizing techniques and are applying these skills in the context of the discussion groups that they moderate. Many participating groups are now taking action and implementing local initiatives. (See Section IV, Results and Accomplishments, for more information.)

NDI/Haiti is currently seeking a coordinator to replace Acting Director François Jean.

### *Civic Forum Assessment*

NDI conducted an interim assessment of its Civic Forum program to determine how the program should move forward to most effectively advance democracy in Haiti. Through consultations with Haitian activists and observers, NDI staff working on the Haiti program (both in Haiti and in Washington) agreed that, while Civic Forum has been an effective vehicle for civic education and imparting community organizing techniques, it was necessary to conduct an interim assessment of the program to determine how it could be improved and/or expanded to maximize results in the future.

From October 21 to 30, 2000, a three-member assessment team consisting of independent assessors and civic education and organization experts Monte Achenbach, Elisabeth Augustin and Eric Goldman, traveled throughout urban and remote rural areas in southern Haiti, using Civic Forum moderators as guides. Their information was acquired through the following activities: observations of 5 Civic Forums; 2 visits of Civic Forum initiatives sites; and interviews with 18 permanent moderators, 3 volunteer moderators, 2 mayors, 3 other elected officials, 2 political activists and 11 participating groups.

Overall, the assessment team was impressed with the program and the moderators. They praised the rural focus of the program and the non-partisan nature of the curriculum and the moderators. Their recommendations included more training for moderators, a more systematic method for on-going evaluation of the program, a prescribed timeline for the program in each commune and possible expansion of the CF target audience to include elected officials and youth. The assessment also stressed the need for NDI to maintain a long-term commitment to the Civic Forum in Haiti. The assessment report is attached as Annex I.

The report was translated into French and distributed to the moderators on November 27. On December 4, NDI field staff, including all of the Civic Forum moderators, took advantage of the weekly training session to discuss the results of the assessment in detail and to develop ideas for the implementation of the assessment team's recommendations.

### **B. Post-Election Support to the CNO**

NDI has been working closely with the *Conseil National d'Observation* (CNO) since its formation last fall. Despite a lack of coordination among its member organizations and a shortage of funding, the CNO was able to deploy more than 20,000 non-partisan election monitors for the May 21 local and legislative elections in Haiti. Since the elections, NDI has continued to work with the CNO leadership to help consolidate the national structure of the network.

*Regional Election Observation Monitoring Conference, Managua, November 5-7, 2000*

NDI sponsored the participation of CNO senior member Fritz Pierre to a meeting of regional election observation monitoring organizations. This meeting was a follow-up to the conference sponsored by the Peruvian civic group *Transparencia* in Lima in September. At the meeting, member organizations of NDI's Civic Network discussed formalized a solidarity network to support fellow civic groups under political attack -- as has occurred in Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. The groups also explored establishing a regional association of election observation groups and exchanging expertise on ways of making political parties more effective and accountable.

To build on the September meeting, the groups met again in Nicaragua from November 5 to 7. The event was hosted by the civic group *Etica y Transparencia* and followed the November 5 Nicaraguan municipal elections. At the event, participants discussed and planned activities related to improving methodologies for election monitoring, renewing political parties, promoting campaign finance reform, monitoring and strengthening legislatures and developing public interest "watchdog" activities.

### **C. New Field Director**

The new Director of the NDI/Haiti Field office, Felix Ulloa, was at NDI's headquarters in Washington, DC, from October 23 to 27 for orientation with program staff. NDI's Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Gerardo Le Chevallier, accompanied Ulloa to Haiti on October 28 for field introduction and orientation in Port-au-Prince. Outgoing Director Almami Cyllah introduced Ulloa to local political leaders, diplomats and accompanied him on several Civic Forum site visits until Cyllah's departure from NDI on November 17.

## **IV. RESULTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **A. Civic Forum**

Since October 1997, NDI has met and exceeded the original objectives of the Haiti Civic Forum program. Continued high levels of participation three years after the program's inception are a strong indicator of the level of involvement and interest of Civic Forum participants. Groups are eager to use the knowledge and skills acquired through Civic Forum to organize initiatives in their communities. Groups in areas not covered by Civic Forum continue to request that NDI launch the program in their communities. The recent Civic Forum assessment, while also aiming to find areas for improvement, also confirmed the overall effectiveness of the program.

**Objective 1:** *To increase participants' knowledge of key democratic principles, institutions and processes*

**Results:** Since the program's inception, more than 350 groups and 10,000 citizens across five departments have participated in regular Civic Forum discussion groups on topics related to democratic principles, institutions and processes. The Civic Forum assessment team also found

that Civic Forums demonstrated a high level of discussion, despite the limited formal education of many participants.

**Objective 2:** *To develop participants' skills to engage more effectively in political processes*

**Results:** The assessment team found that Civic Forum has had a major impact on the communities in which Civic Forum is operating. Many participants and group leaders stated that Civic Forum has galvanized their groups and provided meaning and purpose by structuring meetings and providing a focus for their projects. They found Civic Forum to have a highly empowering effect on participating groups and to have brought a visible increase in group membership. The assessment team reported finding eager, attentive, well attended forums. Participants seemed enthusiastic about the discussions, and they reported widespread sharing of Civic Forum information among family, friends, and neighbors. Government officials gave Civic Forum high marks and expressed their own need for job training. Overall, the assessment team found that Civic Forum inspired hope among participants, both for themselves and their country.

**Objective 3:** *To encourage political initiatives by participants*

**Results:** The assessment team observed that most group initiatives involved some interaction with government officials and were not purely community development activities. For example, they cited the case of the establishment of a women's credit association, the implementation of a deforestation project, the building of a road to a medical clinic, and the influence of several groups in redeveloping a sugar refinery in Darbonne, closed for 14 years – all Civic Forum actions based on participant groups' interaction with government officials.

The assessment team also reported that some of the elected officials found that Civic Forum participants seem to make better use of the law. For example, suspected thieves were brought to judiciary officials instead of being physically assaulted. The Mayor of Leogane told of increased tax payments thanks to Civic Forum.

Some participants in Civic Forum have become government officials, and voter participation and turnout has increased as a result of Civic Forum. Civic Forum has also provided increased understanding of the role of government and the functions of government officials, and participants increasingly see government as a tool for change.

## **B. Continued Support to the CNO**

As one of the young electoral observation groups in the region, the members of the CNO benefit greatly from sharing the experiences of their more seasoned colleagues from throughout the region. In addition to knowledge gained through participation in regional conferences, the CNO is also improving its administrative capacity and is drafting reasonable budgets in consultation with NDI. Furthermore, the conferences, which were the initiatives of civic groups in the region, helped to improve collaboration between the organizations in the hemisphere and to strengthen democracy promotion efforts.

## **V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

NDI plans to draft a new proposal based in large part on the recent Civic Forum assessment mission and resulting discussions among NDI/Haiti staff. In addition to the continuation of its existing groups, NDI is considering a civic education program for local elected officials, since they often receive no training on their responsibilities and have little knowledge of the democratic system of government. NDI is also considering civic education in high schools to sensitize a more impressionable youth to the importance of civic action and responsibility. NDI plans to continue working with the CNO to help them develop a viable, functional organization capable of carrying out its mandate at a national level. Finally, NDI is considering ways of working with journalist associations to encourage informed, independent reporting of the news.

## **Annex I**

### **CIVIC FORUM IN HAITI An Assessment**

Assessment Team for NDI:

Monte Achenbach  
Elisabeth Augustin  
Eric Goldman<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A to this report contains the CVs of the members of the Assessment Team.

## **FINDINGS**

### **I. METHODOLOGY (techniques, materials, training)**

#### ***The Moderators***

NDI's civic forum moderators are outstanding. They are the centerpieces of the program. By working within their own communities and reaching out to local organizations (rather than having participants come to them), the moderators work very effectively at gaining trust and credibility and serve as on-going resources. This contributes greatly to the impact of the program.

The moderators are facilitators and problem solvers in all aspects of community life. Civic Forum derives additional strength from the ability of the moderators to respond flexibly to the needs of their participants and communities (e.g., the moderators' initiation of the Forum Elargi to create networks of local civic organizations and connect them with officials and political party leaders). Another important factor in the success of the program is the political neutrality that moderators maintain in their work, which has resulted in the universal view that NDI does not support any particular political group. Moderators reported that it took some time to overcome groups' initial skepticism of NDI's motives, but their nonpartisan approach and diligent outreach earned them a position of trust in their communities.

The Monday meetings for moderators in Port-au-Prince fall short in terms of training and professional development, particularly for veteran moderators. However, all moderators agreed that sharing of information among themselves is crucial for their work. They found that holding meetings on a weekly basis was necessary despite considerable hardship getting to Port-au-Prince each week.

#### **Group discussion techniques**

Moderators practice participatory methods and techniques of instruction quite effectively (modeling democratic behavior). Both moderators and participants gave high marks to the program's curricular modules, although the groups often require several sessions to complete a single module. The two-phase structure of the program -- basic civic education followed by advocacy and facilitation of group action -- makes sense and has the advantage of reinforcing a trusting relationship. The Civic Forums demonstrated a high level of discussion, despite the limited formal education of many participants.

The Forum Elargi occurred intermittently and not consistently from moderator to moderator. However, they were highly regarded by participants for providing communication and linking different groups. Few initiatives seem to have come from



Forum Elargi, but the simple fact that the meetings have provided a forum for local mediation rather than confrontation has a high value in itself. In some cases, individual groups making up a Forum Elargi would take their own initiatives based on the larger group discussion.

### **Political climate**

The political climate, including consequences of the controversial May 21 elections, did not seem to affect the program negatively (one Forum Elargi was an exception; a wide range of conflicting opinions prevented joint resolutions). On the contrary, Civic Forum has helped participants interpret the political situation within the context of their civic education curriculum and has provided an arena to promote on-going democratic participation.

### **Materials**

Both participants and moderators have expressed a strong need for additional materials: handouts, visual aids, and copies of the constitution.

### **Transportation**

A primary obstacle to the work of moderators is transportation—simply getting to where groups live and meet. Access to remote sites is difficult for moderators without transportation assistance and without protection from the weather and difficult terrain.

## **II. Impact**

### **Program Evaluation**

NDI has not developed a structured, systematic instrument to measure and evaluate the impact of the program. We provide our findings on impact, as have several internal NDI evaluators, based on anecdotal evidence (responses of interviewees) and on our limited observations in the field. But this approach has obvious shortcomings for reaching verifiable conclusions.

Nonetheless, it was clear to us that the forums and the moderators have had a major impact on the communities in which Civic Forum is operating. For instance, many participants and group leaders stated that Civic Forum has galvanized their groups and provided meaning and purpose by structuring meetings and providing a focus for their projects. It has a highly empowering effect on participating groups and has brought a visible increase in group membership. We found eager, attentive, well attended forums. Participants seemed enthusiastic about the discussions, and they reported widespread sharing of Civic Forum information among family, friends, and neighbors. Government officials gave Civic Forum high marks and expressed their own need for job training. We found Civic Forum inspired hope among participants, both for themselves and their country.

## **Initiatives**

Most group initiatives involved some interaction with government officials and were not purely community development activities. We learned, for example, about the establishment of a women's credit association, the implementation of a deforestation project, the building of a road to a medical clinic, and the influence of several groups in redeveloping a sugar refinery in Darbonne, closed for 14 years—all Civic Forum actions based on participant groups' interaction with government officials.

Some of the elected officials shared with us the fact that participants seem to make better use of the law. For example, suspected thieves were brought to judiciary officials instead of being physically assaulted. The Mayor of Leogane told of increased tax payments thanks to the civic forum program.

Some participants in Civic Forum have become government officials, and voter participation and turnout was said to have increased as a result of Civic Forum. It has also provided increased understanding of the role of government and the functions of government officials. Participants increasingly see government as a tool for change. However, initiatives are primarily an outgrowth of individual participating groups and not from coalitions or partnerships. In fact, there is little evidence of coalitions or partnerships emerging from Civic Forum at this time, although mini-Forum Elargi demonstrate a significant potential for encouraging such activity in the future.

## **Other civic programs**

In most communities, NDI is unique. Occasionally there is an awareness of SEDAK (Sant Daksyon Sivik), a program initiated by the Civil Society Reinforcing Project (MSI/Asosye). This program requires participants to go to SEDAK's regional location, which is a "civil society meeting office" that encourages the membership of organizations to engage in training and group alliances. NDI's approach, to the contrary, involves going to the participants' locations, which seems to have had a greater impact. It also appears that SEDAK trainings are oriented toward organization leaders instead of working directly with all group members.

### III. The Future

#### **Program Structure**

Civic Forum is certainly not too big and seems to have found the right balance of staff for its current size. However, any growth in the program would involve tough choices. If it were to expand, NDI would have to consider how to restructure itself to maintain the integrity and strength of the program. This would probably involve multiplying costs until the program is phased out of its current areas of operation. Of course, there is an exceedingly high level of interest and willingness among participating organizations to continue the program where it is currently operating, even after groups have completed both phases. NDI has not created objective criteria for phasing groups out of the program and assessing the long-term need for moderators in a given commune.

#### **Number of moderators**

Although a few of our interviewees requested that NDI send more moderators to communes where Civic Forum is currently operating, we found that two permanent moderators in each commune seemed to be sufficient, especially considering the use, and potential use, of volunteers. As moderators complete Civic Forum modules with participating organizations, the need for continuing assistance decreases, and moderators move on to new groups. Most organizations felt that continued support of NDI moderators and volunteers in their area would help organizations continue to grow and strengthen their capacity to make a local impact.

#### *Volunteer Moderators*

Where volunteer moderators function, they are having a positive effect, even though the quality of their work is not as high as the work of the permanent moderators. Volunteers are able to reach communities that permanent moderators do not have the time or resources to contact regularly, and volunteers serve as on-going resources to groups that are advanced in the Civic Forum curriculum. Volunteer moderators seem to be a natural outgrowth of the Civic Forum and are sustained by a rather informal training provided by the permanent moderators.

We did not find that the volunteer moderator network, REVODEC (Rezo Volonte Demokratik Edikasyon Sivik), is widely known or organized. Based on isolated local examples of substantial REVODEC activity (in communes where Civic Forum is more advanced), we found that such a network has the potential to focus and coordinate the work of volunteers. Without NDI setting a precedent to the contrary, we do not believe that volunteer moderators expect to be paid for their efforts. Their motivation seems to come mainly from an eagerness to share their knowledge and a sense of patriotism. Of course, volunteers cannot be expected to maintain the kinds of duties and schedules that permanent moderators perform as employees of NDI. Individually, volunteers perform well but motivating them as a group could be problematic.

#### *Forum Elargi*

We found scant evidence of follow-up committees being created to spur initiatives following Forum Elargi meetings. However, both moderators and participants strongly

believe that the Forum Elargi format links groups and communities and provides organizations access to public officials and political party leaders.

*Other groups*

There is a strong interest in adding schools and public officials to those receiving Civic Forum training. There is a secondary interest in training church groups and the media.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings listed above, we present a series of recommendations to direct the future development of NDI's Civic Forum program in Haiti. We recognize that NDI's teams in Washington and Haiti will have to grapple with difficult questions related to future funding and evolution of the program. We have approached the recommendations with the idea that this assessment should help NDI prioritize its goals and budgetary considerations in the near and long term.

We want to emphasize that Haitians have grown used to the reality, as they see it, that international organizations start and stop programs at whim. NDI, in initiating Civic Forum, has begun a very long-term process of constructing the basic building blocks of democracy. We applaud that approach and are convinced of its community-transforming merits. However, this process is one that requires – and deserves – NDI's sustained commitment over time. While an “exit strategy” should be part of the process of making the most efficient use of program resources and preventing local dependency on the program, we strongly recommend that NDI plan to continue its operation of Civic Forum in Haiti for several years. We will address this issue in more detail in the “Future” section of the recommendations.

### **I. Methodology (techniques, materials, training)**

#### **Moderators**

As NDI moderators are the “key point” of Civic Forum's success in Haiti, our recommendations begin with them:

- Invest in the moderators. Provide them with increased professional training in topics such as conflict resolution, teacher training, using the local media to enhance their work, international political affairs, national political affairs, community development techniques, project proposal writing and budget preparation, international program exposure and travel. These topics could be prepared for Monday meetings (with guest speakers on occasion) or in separate seminars and trips.
- Ease the travel burden of moderators. Examples include the provision of rain gear, boots, bicycles, motorcycles, flashlights, and first aid kits (budgetary limits are obviously a major constraint in this area).
- Provide on-going acknowledgments and rewards to moderators.
- Continue to have moderators work in communes in which they live and maintain their extensive outreach to communities, no matter how remote.
- Whether and when to hold Forum Elargi should be left up to the moderators' discretion according to local conditions. NDI should encourage holding of Forum

Elargi meetings and provide adequate training to facilitate creation of such local organizational networks and joint actions.

- Include moderators at all times in program planning and decision making.

### ***Curricular Format***

- Maintain the current format of Civic Forum's curriculum: Phases I and II, participatory methods of discussion, animation techniques, and modular approach. Supplementary modules should place emphasis on rural law, decentralization and local governance, and citizen action (i.e., drafting and circulating petitions).

### **Forum Elargi**

- Accept the adequacy of Forum Elargi meetings as an important arena for networking, exchange of ideas, and community exposure to government officials. Allow initiatives to spring from such meetings naturally over time, at the discretion and judgment of the moderators (with an eye toward maintaining the energy of local groups to take action on their own, if they so decide).

### **Materials**

- Develop and distribute more materials based on the modules and more copies of the constitution and other official documents for use by moderators and participants.

## **II. Impact**

- Establish a systematic, verifiable method of evaluating the impact of the Civic Forum program. Build evaluation into the job description of the moderators and provide training and materials for tracking membership, learning and initiatives of participating groups. Move beyond simple participant evaluations of civic forum sessions and anecdotal information provided by moderators. Take account within the evaluation for the value of community development initiatives (those that involve interaction with government officials and those that do not), and the use of the law to affect economic, political and social change (pursuant to De Toqueville's view that strong civic organizations, whatever their activities, are the basic building blocks of participatory democracy).
- Due to already high demands on the moderators' time and abilities, NDI should consider hiring one or two local graduate students on a part-time contractual (or internship) basis to perform continuing analysis of Civic Forum's impact, beginning with compilation of baseline data and continuing through a defined time period in the life of the program.

### III. The Future

#### **Continuation**

- As stated earlier, NDI should make a long-term, substantial commitment to the continuation of Civic Forum in Haiti.

#### **Moderators**

- The job description and strategy of moderators should include the development of a volunteer network to ensure the continuation of Civic Forum over the long run.
- Moderators' positions should evolve over time to become trainers, coordinators, and resources for volunteers. Support and training should emphasize group discussion skills and technical assistance.
- NDI-Haiti should develop clear, objective criteria for the evolution of Civic Forum activities in a given commune – and strategize for NDI's eventual departure.

#### **Impact**

- The job description and strategy of the moderator should include ensuring sustainability of the program following organizations' completion of Phase II -- i.e. strengthening organizations' internal abilities to build on achievements they have realized through Civic Forum. This can be accomplished by having each organization designate at least one representative or agent to serve as a direct trainee of Civic Forum's methods and material and as a local liaison to NDI and Civic Forum.

#### **Elected Officials**

- Elected officials are in desperate need of civic education and training. This need was mentioned almost universally, including by elected officials themselves. Such training would begin with CASEC and ASEC members (the local legislative and executive bodies) and mayors. In addition, political candidates running for office have little knowledge of the role and responsibilities of the offices they seek. Citizens, newly educated in democracy, expressed an enormous amount of frustration after encountering unresponsive and uninformed elected officials. Either NDI should undertake this initiative or coordinate with other development groups to assure that this critical need be met. If included in Civic Forum, new modules pertaining directly to elected officials and political candidates should be created.

#### **Regional Civic Forum Offices**

- NDI's first priority should be strengthening Civic Forum within communes in which it is currently operating and assessing its ability to reach both "graduated" and

new groups through volunteers. As part of this process, NDI should consider the evolution of the program to include creating regional offices -- with an eye toward local support and program expansion. Regional centers or staff could provide technical and administrative assistance to permanent moderators and technical assistance to volunteer moderators and their network. These centers would provide meeting and training opportunities to replace weekly Monday meetings in Port-au-Prince. The Port-au-Prince-based staff should plan on regular travel to its regional centers to monitor the development of the program. We recommend that one of the permanent moderators in each “mature” commune become a regional coordinator.

### **Volunteers**

- No fees should be provided to volunteer moderators. NDI should only provide them with technical assistance. NDI-Haiti might consider ways of encouraging local organizations receiving volunteer assistance to compensate the volunteers through pooling local resources (spurring long-term motivation to continue the program through local initiative).
- REVODEC may become an option to continue the program in the future. At this time, we recommend that the moderators supervise REVODEC and provide appropriate coordination and training. It is through this approach that we see the long-term perpetuation of the program. We do not believe that REVODEC will have the capacity to “take over” the work of NDI – at least in the short term. We see volunteers as a valuable and integral part of the program with their ability to reach areas where moderators cannot go and to support “graduated” organizations. Also, participating organizations themselves should be encouraged to sustain Civic Forum without requiring formal participation as volunteers -- through designating representatives or agents to be trained locally as resources to their groups.

### **Schools**

- We strongly recommend that the Civic Forum concept be extended to schools -- especially high schools. We do not see this initiative as a way to perpetuate the program itself but as a separate function. A curriculum can be developed that is guided by the Civic Forum objectives of knowledge, skills, principles and behavior. It would have a strong teacher-training component. NDI could work with Haitian educators to develop lesson plans that use Haitian law, history and culture as the means of helping students to become active citizens in a democracy. Within the current context of Civic Forum, some moderators expressed an interest in extending their reach to schools. They should be supported in this effort, particularly in “advanced” communes, which have already developed a wide base of community organizations.

### **“Exit Strategy”**

- NDI should not be considering an imminent departure from the operation of this project. To the contrary, NDI’s current role in ensuring the continuation and expansion of the program is crucial. Of course, NDI must plan for a gradual



withdrawal from its work in this area – over the course of several years. There is not currently a Haitian NGO on the national scene that has the credibility or resources to continue Civic Forum. But NDI should begin now to assess the ability of a group of committed, talented, and responsible Haitians to learn from the program and, gradually, to take increasing responsibility over Civic Forum. In combination with the moderators' efforts to train volunteers and support volunteer networks, NDI will ensure that the effective Civic Forum approach is available to grassroots civic organizations across the country.

## **CONCLUSION**

We overwhelmingly endorse a long-term, sustained commitment to Civic Forum in Haiti. It is an extraordinary program, implemented by extraordinary individuals, in a society starved for this kind of experience. NDI has developed an outstanding reputation and is well placed to continue its efforts. We recommend expansion to evolve through “regionalization,” increased responsibilities of permanent moderators, and training of volunteer moderators.

This report has focused on the objectives of the assessment we were asked to pursue. It would be incomplete, however, if we did not make note of the human drama of this remarkable program. Groups of the poorest of people sit under trees in rapt discussion about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Moderators walk for miles (up mountains and down ravines), to conduct discussions about democracy, with the energy, devotion and skill that rival the finest educators anywhere. The Civic Forum is nourishment for people desperately hungry for knowledge and the practice of democracy and citizen action. Voters and officials alike welcome it. The grassroots approach is touching thousands of people, and millions more can be reached.

It is our view that while a systematic instrument to measure the precise changes occurring is not yet in place, change as a result of this program is indeed significant. This is great news for a country that seems to produce only sad headlines and an image of hopelessness. We see Civic Forum in Haiti only in its infancy, a program that warrants long-term nurturing, growth and support.

